

Monthly Update – December 2011

Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program

TAHA'S FIRST EVER HORTICULTURAL FAIR

USAID-TAPP's primary counterpart, the Tanzania Horticultural Association (TAHA), organized a successful horticultural show in Arusha. The inaugural event showcased innovations in the horticulture industry. The three-day fair (December 1- 3, 2011) brought together more than 300 farmers, service providers, and buyers from around Tanzania. The event focused on building the capacity of farmers by training them on various aspects of the horticultural business, such as finding new markets for their products. Over 40 horticultural service providers gave demonstrations and set up exhibitions to disseminate information on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs).

"This kind of event will enable Tanzania smallholder farmers to come together and share horticultural knowledge and experience."

-- Mr. Jumanne Maghembe, Tanzania's Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives



Photo by Fintrac, Inc.

Minister for Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Jumanne Maghembe (right) receiving information on proper nursery preparation from USAID-TAPP Zonal Production Manager Manfred Bitala during TAHA's horticultural fair.

HORTICULTURAL TRAINING CENTER OPENED

Over 700 smallholder farmers from the Morogoro region are already benefitting from the recently established horticulture training center in Dakawa district. The training center features a two acre demonstration plot which USAID-TAPP agronomists use to showcase GAPs throughout the planting cycle. In December, USAID-TAPP agronomists demonstrated the importance of employing GAPs from the beginning of the planting season. During the training, farmers learned how to properly raise planting beds and use seedling trays. The use of seedling trays, instead of sowing seeds directly into the soil, improves germination rates and results in healthy root development. Farmers learned that transplanting the seedlings into raised beds cleared of any weeds will significantly increase the survival rate of the plant. The raised beds will also improve soil moisture retention and in the long term require less water.



Photo by Fintrac, Inc.

Mang'ora Farmer Group sowing onion seeds on raised beds. Raised beds help roots develop and improve moisture retention in the soil.

BIG HARVESTS

A bumper onion harvest and over 1,000 percent increase in onion revenues gave farmer Alfa Ngolia of Rundugai village in Kilimanjaro region a lot to celebrate during the winter holidays. Before Mr. Ngolia attended USAID-TAPP trainings, he harvested an average of 12 bags of low-quality onions from his one acre farm which he sold locally for Tshs. 25,000 a bag. Poor land preparation and agronomic practices affected his yield and income year after year. However, earlier this year things began to change when Mr. Ngolia started attending trainings by USAID-TAPP agronomists and began to apply the GAPs he learned during the training demonstrations on his own farm. Simple improvements such as proper plant spacing, use of improved planting material and the use of starter fertilizer solutions started to pay off. In December, Mr. Ngolia harvested 50 bags of high quality onions valued at 70,000 per bag resulting in Tshs 3,500,000 (\$2,150) in revenues.

With assistance from USAID-TAPP, the Patandi Women Group is making even small parcels of land highly productive, earning money for their group and contributing to the availability of nutrient dense foods in their community. This month, the 29-member women's group harvested eight bags of high quality carrots (six first class and two second class) from their plot which measures four meters wide and 15 meters long. USAID-TAPP agronomists trained the women's group on how to maximize the potential of their land through the use of GAPs and technologies.

According to the group secretary, Ms. Elinuru Pallangyo, the use of raised beds and proper spacing contributed to the production of bigger and healthier carrots. The roots need to be in contact with solid particles, air, and water. If soil is not prepared properly, the plants, through the root system, have to spend more energy. The raised beds have to be made tall in order to improve aeration, roots development, and drainage to avoid compacting around the roots zone.



Photo by Fintrac, Inc.

Secretary of the Patandi Women Group, Elinuru Pallangyo, holding carrots harvested from their plot.

"When you have a raised beds and proper spacing, you allow the carrots to grow smoothly and the soil retains moisture to enable consistent growth for the plants."
-- Elinuru, Patandi Women's Group Secretary

According to Elinuru, before the USAID-TAPP intervention, they could only harvest two bags of first class carrots, three second class bags and the remaining were rejects. The women group sold the eight bags to a nearby market and put the additional income towards the group fund. The group uses their collective funding to support activities such as drying fruits and vegetables, like banana, carrots and mangoes, to preserve the produce for a longer time.

NEW DEMONSTRATION PLOTS

In December, USAID-TAPP agronomists established 10 demonstration sites in Arusha, Mangola, Moshi, and Morogoro to showcase off-season production techniques for onions, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes. Despite high market prices for these crops, often two to four times normal market prices during the off-season, farmers traditionally avoid off-season production due to the potential for crop losses from pests and diseases. To help farmers overcome this obstacle, USAID-TAPP is promoting disease-resistant varieties on the demonstration sites. In addition to the new varieties, USAID-TAPP agronomists have been training farmers at the demonstration sites on planting and cultural techniques that promote good air movement between plants and discourage disease, like pruning and trellising. They are also providing trainings on disease identification, intervention thresholds, and correct and safe protectant chemicals. While these GAPs can be used throughout the year, climate variation of the off-season makes such intervention more critical.

MULTIFLOWER SUPPORTS FARMERS

In December, USAID-TAPP partner Multiflower purchased 18,700 Kgs of flower seeds from USAID-TAPP supported smallholder farmers, valued at over Tshs 55,000,000 (\$35,500). Multiflower processes flower seeds and sells them to European markets. USAID-TAPP and Multiflower agronomists are teaching these farmers about GAPs and improved technologies such as the use of harrowing during field cleaning. Harrowing helps smooth the soil and facilitate flower seed growth. To date, over 5,000 smallholder farmers have adopted this and other GAPs as a result. Through a partnership with USAID-TAPP, Multiflower is expanding its business to Kilimanjaro, Manyara, and Morogoro regions and working with 500 new farmers.

Tanzania Agriculture Productivity Program

"Increased food security through enhanced productivity"

TAPP is a five-year program implemented by Fintrac Inc. in conjunction with TAHA, the Tanzania Horticultural Association. It is designed to increase smallholder farmer incomes through enhanced productivity, crop diversification and improved market access.

Visit www.Tanzania-Agric.org for more information on upcoming activities and to receive copies of monthly bulletins and success stories.

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